

Supralapsarianism, or 'O Felix Culpa'

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Among the tenets of a certain sort of Calvinism is Supralapsarianism, a claim about the order of the decrees of God. God has decreed to permit humanity to fall into sin; he has also decreed to save at least some of the fallen.¹ Does the former decree precede or succeed the latter? According to Supralapsarianism the decree to save some of the fallen precedes the decree to permit sin; according to Infralapsarianism, it's the other way around. The debate between Supra and Infra has sometimes been held up as an example of Protestant scholasticism run amok. That is because, in part, it is extremely hard to see just what the debate is. The main problem here is the 'precede' and 'succeed'. As the disputants saw, the question isn't about temporal precedence (it isn't that God promulgated part of his decree at one time and part at a later); they therefore suggested that the precedence in question is logical. As Carl Henry says, "The terms supra and infra stipulate whether the divine decree to elect some to salvation comes logically before or after the decrees to create and to permit the fall."² But what would that mean? Would the idea be that one of the decrees entailed but was not entailed by the other? But then, apparently, the Infras would have to think the decree to permit the fall entails but is not entailed by the decree to save some of the fallen. The Infras may have been misguided, but they weren't that obtuse; surely they saw that the proposition God decrees to save some of the fallen entails but is not entailed by the proposition God decrees to permit some to fall; but then presumably that's compatible with their infralapsarianism. So what does this dispute amount to?

One understandable reaction is that it doesn't much matter what the dispute amounts to; the question concerns wholly arcane matters where Scripture is for the most part silent; why waste time on something like that? Isn't this something like arguing about how many angels can dance on the head, or maybe even the point, of a pin? I have some sympathy for this reaction. Nevertheless, I think we can see which of these is right and what kind of priority is relevant. And we can see which is right by thinking about the problem of evil.

I Suffering and Evil

The late and unlamented 20th Century displayed an absolutely appalling amount and variety both of suffering and of evil; perhaps no previous century rivals it. As I'm thinking of the matter, suffering encompasses any kind of pain or discomfort: pain or discomfort that results from disease, injury, oppression, overwork, old age, sorrow for one's sins, disappointment with one's self or with one's lot in life (or that of persons close to one), the pain of loneliness, isolation, betrayal, unrequited love, and awareness of the suffering of others. I'm thinking of evil, on the other hand, as, fundamentally, a matter of free creatures' doing what is wrong and/or displaying vicious character traits. Often pain and suffering is a result of evil, as in some of the events for which our century will be remembered--the horrifying 70-year-long Marxist experiments in eastern Europe and China with their many millions of victims, the Holocaust, genocide in late twentieth-century Europe and Africa, and the like. Of course much suffering and evil is banal, prosaic, commonplace, and is none the better for that.

It isn't only the twentieth century that has featured suffering and evil. Christians and other believers in God have long been baffled and perplexed by its presence, or by the amount of it, or by certain especially heinous displays of it, some of which are so horrifying that it seems callous and unfeeling to bring them up in the context of a scholarly discussion. Why does God permit evil, or why does he permit so much of it, or why does he permit those horrifying varieties of it? This bafflement and perplexity is widely represented in the Bible: perhaps especially in the Psalms and the book of Job, but elsewhere as well. And the perplexity is by no means merely theoretical: faced with an especially abhorrent example of suffering or evil in his own life, or the life of someone he loves, a believer can find himself tempted to take towards God an attitude he himself hates--an attitude of mistrust, or suspicion, or bitterness, or rebellion. A person in this condition may not be much tempted to doubt the existence or even the goodness of God; nevertheless he may resent God, fail to trust him, be wary of him, be unable to think of him as a loving father, think of him as distant and indifferent.

Now many have urged that knowledge of the extent, variety, duration and distribution of suffering and evil ("the facts of evil", for short) confront the believer with a problem of quite another

sort.³ The facts of evil, they argue, can serve as the premise of a powerful argument against the very existence of God--against the existence, that is, of an all-powerful, all-knowing and wholly good person who has created the world and loves the creatures he has created. Call such an argument 'atheological'; atheological arguments go all the way back to the ancient world, at least to Epicurus, whose argument is repeated in the eighteenth century by Hume:

Epicurus' old questions are yet unanswered.

Is he willing to prevent evil, but not able? then he is impotent. Is he able, but not willing? then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? whence then is evil?⁴

And the claim is that the facts of evil constitute a defeater for theistic belief for those theists who are fully aware of them--and if for theistic belief, then also for Christian belief. Christians may find this argument less than compelling;⁵ nevertheless they may also find the facts of evil disturbing, both from a practical and from a theoretical point of view; understanding of evil and its place in God's world is an important goal for Christians, one where philosophers can perhaps be of some help.

Christian philosophers have for the most part concentrated on the apologetic effort of rebutting the various versions of the argument from evil. These rebuttals have taken several forms. One sort of response specifies some particular kind of good, and suggests that God could not have created a world displaying that kind of good without permitting evil. Thus perhaps the world is a vale of soul-making, with evil and suffering permitting human beings to achieve certain desirable spiritual states they couldn't otherwise attain. Alternatively, evil arises from creaturely free will: God wanted a world in which there are free creatures who freely obey his commands and enter into personal relationship with him; but of course whether a creature freely obeys God's commands is not up to God: it is up to the creature in question; and the counterfactuals of freedom are such that God couldn't actualize a really good world with free creatures without permitting evil. There is also the 'noseeum response':⁶ God has his reasons for permitting evil, but the epistemic distance between him and us is such that we can't really hope to know what those reasons are, or why they require him to permit the evil we see.⁷ Still another response: Donald Turner suggests that (to put it roughly and inaccurately) perhaps God creates concrete worlds or

cosmoi corresponding to all of the possible worlds that are on balance good.⁸ Some of these worlds, of course, will contain a great deal of evil (and even more good); our world is one of those worlds.

These responses are useful and important. But in addition to rebutting these arguments, Christian philosophers should also turn to a different task; that of understanding the evil our world displays from a Christian perspective: granted, the atheological arguments are unsuccessful; but how should Christians think about evil?⁹ I therefore want to suggest still another response, or rather I want to reinvent the wheel and propose for further consideration a response that has been with us for a long time. I don't claim that this response answers all our questions or relieves all of our perplexity. It does make a contribution along these lines, however, and in what follows I want to explore it, to see what it has to offer us.

Suppose initially we think about the matter as follows. God intends to create a world; to do so, he must weakly actualize a possible world.¹⁰ He considers all the uncountably many possible worlds, each with its own degree of excellence or value. How shall we think of the value or goodness of a possible world? Well, what sorts of things are good or valuable or excellent, on the one hand, or bad or unhappy or deplorable on the other? The answer is easy; states of affairs (perhaps among other things) are good or bad.¹¹ John's being in pain is a bad state of affairs, and John's suffering pain magnificently, a good one; there being many people who treat each other in accord with the law of love is a good state of affairs; there being people who hate God and each other is a bad. Since possible worlds are states of affairs, they are precisely the sorts of things that are good or bad, valuable or disvaluable. Perhaps there is no best possible world (there is a tie, or for each world, no matter how good, there is another better yet) but in any event what God intended, in creating, was to actualize (weakly actualize) a really good possible world.

Now many of these possible worlds, I take it, are such that it is not within God's power to weakly actualize them. I've argued for this elsewhere;¹² here I'll just sketch the argument. For a given possible world W , let $T(W)$ be the largest state of affairs God strongly actualizes in W .¹³ Assuming that there are nontrivial true counterfactuals of freedom,¹⁴ God would be able to weakly actualize a given possible world W only if the counterfactual

(1) If God were to strongly actualize $T(W)$, then W would be actual

were true. Now there are possible worlds W and W^* such that God strongly actualizes the same states of affairs in W as in W^* ; that is, there are many possible worlds W and W^* such that $T(W) = T(W^*)$.

Where $T(W) = T(W^*)$, it is of course impossible that both (1) and

(2) If God were to strongly actualize $T(W^*)$, then W^* would be actual

be true; that is because it is not possible that both W and W^* be actual. Accordingly, either W or W^* is a world God could not have actualized. Following Thomas Flint, we could say that the worlds God could have weakly actualized are the feasible worlds. God's aim in creating, then, is to create an extremely good feasible world.

So far so good; but what are good-making qualities among worlds--what sort of features will make one world better than another? Here one thinks, for example, of the amount of creaturely happiness; a world with a great deal of creaturely happiness (i.e., a world such that if it were actual, there would be a great deal of creaturely happiness) is so far forth a better world than one in which there is little such happiness. Other characteristics on which the goodness of a world depends would be the amount of beauty, justice, creaturely goodness, performance of duty, and the like. The existence of creatures who conform to the divine law to love God above all and their neighbor as themselves (which presumably holds not just for humans but for other rational creatures--angels, other rational species in our universe, if there are any others) would also be an important determinant of a world's goodness or excellence. And of course there are also badmaking characteristics of a world: containing much suffering, pain, creaturely rejection of God, hatred, sin and the like. Fundamentally, a world W is a better world than a world W^* just if God would prefer the actuality of W to the actuality of W^* .

The above list of good-making characteristics, however, omits the two most important. First, any world in which God exists is enormously more valuable than any world in which he does not exist. According to the traditional doctrine of God's necessary existence, of course, God is both concrete and necessarily existent, and the only being who displays both those characteristics. If this doctrine is correct, then there aren't any worlds in which God does not exist. Still further, whether or not there are any such

worlds, God will be able to choose only among those in which he exists; hence this greatmaking characteristic, trivially, will be present in any world he chooses for weak actualization.

Given the truth of Christian belief, however, there is also a contingent good-making characteristic of our world--one that isn't present in all worlds--that towers enormously above all the rest of the contingent states of affairs included in our world: the unthinkably great good of divine Incarnation and Atonement. Jesus Christ, the second person of the divine trinity, incomparably good, holy, and sinless, was willing to empty himself, to take on our flesh and become incarnate, and to suffer and die so that we human beings can have life and be reconciled to the Father. In order to accomplish this, he was willing to undergo suffering of a depth and intensity we cannot so much as imagine, including even the shattering climax of being abandoned by God the Father himself: "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" God the Father, the first being of the whole universe, perfectly good and holy, all-powerful and all-knowing, was willing to permit his Son to undergo this suffering, and to undergo enormous suffering himself in order to make it possible for us human beings to be reconciled to him. And this in face of the fact that we have turned our back upon God, have rejected him, are sunk in sin, indeed, are inclined to resent God and our neighbor (Heidelberg?). Could there be a display of love to rival this? More to the present purpose, could there be a good-making feature of a world to rival this?

Suppose we think about these points a bit further. We are considering just the worlds in which God exists; for present purposes, let's assume that traditional theism is true, and that these are all the worlds there are. The first thing to note, I think, is that all of these worlds--all possible worlds, then--are very good. For God is unlimited in goodness and holiness, as well as in power and knowledge; these properties, furthermore, are essential to him; and this means, I believe, that God not only has created a world that is very good, but that there aren't any conditions under which he would have created a world that is less than very good. It isn't possible that he create such a world; every possible world in which God creates is very good. For every possible world containing creatures is a world such that it is possible, in the broadly logical sense, that God weakly actualize it;¹⁵ none is such that God's goodness or love or mercy would make it impossible for him to actualize it. There is therefore no level of value among

possible worlds such that God couldn't actualize possible worlds whose value falls below that level (and such that some possible worlds fall below that level). The class of possible worlds God's love and goodness prevents him from actualizing is empty. All possible worlds, we might say, are eligible worlds: worlds that God's goodness, mercy and love would permit him to actualize.

Now I don't mean to suggest that every imaginable or in some sense conceivable world is a very good world. Perhaps we can imagine or in some sense conceive of worlds in which the only things that exist are persons always in excruciating pain. No such world is in fact possible, however, if God, as we are assuming, is a necessary being who has essentially such properties as unlimited goodness, love, knowledge, and power. For first, of course, every world includes the existence of God. But neither would any world contain just God and creatures always in excruciating pain: God wouldn't create such worlds. So perhaps there are imaginable or even conceivable worlds that are not very good; the fact is, however, no such world is possible. All possible worlds are very good.

Of course it is also possible that God refrain from creating altogether. If he had done so, however, the world still would have been very good; for his own existence, of course, would have been actual. Indeed, any world in which God exists is in a good sense infinitely valuable. I don't mean to suggest that we can apply Cantorian infinitary mathematics to these topics. I don't mean to suggest that there are proper units of goodness--felicifics, for example--such that any world containing God displays infinitely many of those units of goodness. Still, God himself, who is unlimited in goodness, love, knowledge, power and the like, exists in any such world; it follows, I suggest, that the value of any state of affairs in which God alone exists is itself unlimited.

But what is the force of 'unlimited' here? I take it to mean that there are no nonlogical limits to God's display of these great-making properties: no nonlogical limit to his goodness, love, knowledge and power. From this it follows, I believe, that any state of affairs containing God alone--any state of affairs that would have been actual had God not created anything at all--is also in a sensible sense infinite in value. It is not that any such world *W* is of maximal value, so that there are no possible worlds better than *W*. On the contrary: a world that also contains very good creatures--free creatures, perhaps, who always

do what is right--would be a better world than W. No: it's something else. To see what, consider a possible world W and then consider the state of affairs W- consisting just in the existence and properties of the free creatures W contains. Let us also suppose that we have a coherent sense of entailment in which W- does not entail the existence of God, even though the latter is a necessary state of affairs. (I believe there are such senses, but don't have the space to pursue the matter here.) Now the way in which such a world W is unlimited in value is that W-, no matter how good, and no matter how many wonderful creatures with splendid properties it displays, is not as good as the state of affairs consisting in the existence of God. We might say that in this way the good of God's existence is incommensurable with creaturely goods. But it is also incommensurable with creaturely evils. No matter how much sin and suffering and evil W- contains, it is vastly outweighed by the goodness of God, so that W is a good world, and indeed a very good world. It follows, once more, that every possible world is a very good world.

But that doesn't mean that none are more valuable than others. The fact is: some possible worlds are much better than others. For there is a second and enormously impressive good-making feature of our world, a feature to be found only in some and not in all possible worlds. This is the towering and magnificent good of divine incarnation and atonement. According to the traditional Christian way of looking at the matter, God was in no way obliged to provide a way of salvation for his erring creatures. It would have been consistent with his love, goodness and mercy not to institute this marvellous plan by which we sinful creatures can have life and be reconciled with God. Hence there are possible worlds in which there are free creatures who go wrong, and in which there is no atonement; in these worlds all these free creatures suffer the consequences of their sin and are ultimately cut off from God. Such a world, I say, is not as good--perhaps not nearly as good--as a world in which sinful creatures are offered redemption and salvation from their sins.

In fact I believe we can go further. I believe that any world with incarnation and atonement is a better world than any without it--or at any rate better than any world in which God does nothing comparable to incarnation and atonement. It is hard to imagine what God could do that is in fact comparable to incarnation and atonement; but perhaps this is just a limitation of our imagination. But

since this is so hard to imagine, I propose that we ignore those possible worlds, if there are any, in which God does not arrange for incarnation and atonement, but does something else of comparable excellence. So consider the splendid and gracious marvel of incarnation and atonement. I believe that the great goodness of this state of affairs, like that of the divine existence itself, makes its value incommensurable with the value of states of affairs involving creaturely good and bad. Thus the value of incarnation and atonement cannot be matched by any aggregate of creaturely goods. No matter how many excellent creatures there are in a world, no matter how rich and beautiful and sinless their lives, the aggregated value of their lives would not match that of incarnation and atonement; any world with incarnation and atonement would be better yet. And no matter how much evil, how much sin and suffering a world contains, the aggregated badness would be outweighed by the goodness of incarnation and atonement, outweighed in such a way that the world in question is very good. In this sense, therefore, any world with incarnation and atonement is of infinite value by virtue of containing two goods of infinite value: the existence of God and incarnation and atonement. Under this assumption, there will be a certain level of excellence or goodness, among possible worlds, such that all the worlds at that level or above contain incarnation and atonement. Call this 'the strong value assumption', and say that any world whose value equals or exceeds ϵ , is a highly eligible world.

I am inclined to accept the strong value assumption, but I don't need anything quite as powerful as all that for my argument. I can hold something weaker. Contrast two kinds of possible worlds. In the first kind, there are free creatures who always do only what is right, who live in love and harmony with God and each other, and do so, let's add, through all eternity. Now for each of these worlds W of this kind, there is a world W^* of the second kind. In W^* God creates the very same creatures as in W ; but in W^* these free creatures rebel against him, fall into sin and wickedness, turn their backs upon God. In W^* , however, God graciously provides a means of salvation by way of incarnation and atonement. My claim is that for any such worlds W and W^* , W^* is a better world than W . Unlike the strong value assumption, this claim does not entail that every world with incarnation and atonement is better than any world without them, and it does not entail that there is a level of value such that every world at or above

that level contains incarnation and atonement. What it does imply, however, is that there is no level of value such that none of the worlds at or above that level contain incarnation and atonement. Call this the moderate value assumption.

But my argument doesn't require even the moderate value assumption.¹⁶ All it really requires is that among the worlds of great value, there be some that include incarnation and atonement. Indeed, we can go further: given that all of the possible worlds including creatures are worlds sufficiently good for God to actualize them, all that is really required, for my argument, is that incarnation and atonement be possible, i.e., that there be possible worlds that include them. Since, according to Christian thought, this state of affairs is actual, it is a fortiori possible.

I shall conduct the argument under the strong value assumption, merely reminding the reader that the argument can also be conducted under the moderate or weak assumptions. Under the strong assumption, the value of any world which displays incarnation and atonement will exceed that of any world without those features. Perhaps, even, the value of incarnation and atonement, (i.e., the complex event involving the actions of God the Father and God the Son) is so great that any world in which it occurs is as valuable as any other world, so that the value of all the worlds in which Atonement occurs is equal. We needn't go as far as all that, however; more modestly, we can say that the value of the worlds with atonement exceeds that of worlds without atonement, and the value of the former are clumped together in such a way that while some may be more valuable than others, none is very much more valuable than any other. More modestly still, we can say simply that all the worlds in which incarnation and atonement are present are worlds of very great goodness, achieving that level of goodness such that no world without incarnation and atonement achieves that level.

Accordingly, if God proposes to actualize a really good possible world, one whose value exceeds . . ., he will create a world containing Incarnation and Atonement. But of course all the worlds with Incarnation and Atonement contain. For Atonement is among other things a matter of creatures' being saved from the consequences of their sin; therefore if there were no evil, there would be no sin, no consequences of sin to be saved from, and hence no atonement. Therefore a necessary condition of

Atonement is sin and evil. But all the highly eligible worlds contain Atonement; hence all the highly eligible worlds contain sin and evil, and the suffering consequent upon them. You can't have a world whose value exceeds, without sin and evil; sin and evil is a necessary condition of the value of every really good possible world. O Felix Culpa indeed!¹⁷ But then this gives us a very straightforward and simple response to the question "Why is there evil in the world?" The response is that God wanted to create a highly eligible world, wanted to actualize one of the best of all the possible worlds; all those worlds contain atonement; hence they all contain sin and evil. I've claimed elsewhere that theodicies are unsuccessful: "And here I must say that most attempts to explain why God permits evil--theodicies, as we may call them--strike me as tepid, shallow and ultimately frivolous."¹⁸ But doesn't the above furnish us with an answer to the question "Why does God permit evil?" The answer is: because he wanted to actualize a possible world whose value was greater than.; but all those possible worlds contain Incarnation and Atonement; hence all those worlds contain evil. So if a theodicy is an attempt to explain why God permits evil, what we have here is a theodicy--and, if I'm right, a successful theodicy.

And as a bonus, we get a clear resolution of the supra/infra debate: the Supras are right. God's fundamental and first intention is to actualize an extremely good possible world, one whose value exceeds.; but all those worlds contain Incarnation and Atonement and hence also sin and evil; so the decree to provide incarnation and atonement and hence salvation is prior to the decree to permit fall into sin. The priority in question isn't temporal, and isn't exactly logical either; it is a matter, rather, of ultimate aim as opposed to proximate aim. God's ultimate aim, here, is to create a world of a certain level of value. That aim requires that he aim to create a world in which there is Incarnation and Atonement--which, in turn, requires that there be sin and evil. So there is a clear sense in which the decree to provide salvation precedes the decree to permit sin; but there is no comparable sense in which the decree to permit sin precedes the decree to permit evil.

One final point before we turn to objections. In *Salvifici Doloris*, a recent apostolic letter from Pope John Paul II on the Christian Meaning of Suffering, we read that

Each one is also called to share in that suffering through which the Redemption was accomplished. He is called to share in that suffering through which all human suffering has also been redeemed. . . . Thus each man, in his suffering, can also become a sharer in the redemptive suffering of Christ. (p. 31).

Here the suggestion seems to be that we human beings, by virtue of suffering, can participate and take part in, can contribute to the divine suffering by which mankind is redeemed. Now this seems to suggest that Christ's suffering and sacrifice, was somehow incomplete: if my contribution is genuinely useful, must there not be something in some sense lacking in what Christ himself did in the Atonement? From a Christian perspective, this seems a bit suspect. But the same suggestion is made by the apostle Paul, whose credentials here are certainly beyond question: "Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body which is the church" (Colossians 1:24).¹⁹ "What is still lacking in regard to Christ's affliction"? What could still be lacking? What could this lack be?

From the present perspective there is an answer: highly eligible possible worlds, those whose value exceeds level, also contain creaturely suffering, suffering on the part of victims and perpetrators of sin. This suffering is a necessary condition of the goodness of the world in question. In suffering, then, we creatures can be like Christ. We get to take part and participate in his redemptive activity. So, for a highly eligible world to be actualized, more is needed than just the suffering of Christ. All of these worlds contain atonement; so they all contain divine suffering; but they also all contain creaturely suffering. Creatures, therefore, can fill up what is lacking in regard to Christ's suffering in the following way: there is a necessary condition of the goodness of truly good (highly eligible) possible worlds that is not and cannot be satisfied by Christ's suffering; it requires creaturely suffering as well. It is in this sense that Paul as well as the rest of us can fill up what is still lacking in regard to Christ's suffering.

II Objections

Accordingly, the Felix Culpa approach can perhaps provide us with a theodicy. But of course it does so properly only if it isn't itself subject to fatal flaws. Is it? What might be objections to it? There are at least three principle objections to this line of thought, or perhaps three kinds of difficult questions to

answer. First, why does God permit suffering as well as sin and evil? Second, why does God permit so much suffering and evil? And third, if God permitted human suffering and evil in order to achieve a world in which there is Incarnation and Atonement, wouldn't he be manipulative, calculating, treating his creatures like means instead of ends? There is a sort of psychological disorder called 'Munchausen-by-proxy syndrome'²⁰ in which parents harm their children and then rush them to the hospital in order to look heroic and get attention; wouldn't this be a bit like that? In the interests of decency and good order I will take these up one at a time and in order.

A. Why Suffering?

I said above that the Felix Culpa line of thought offers a theodicy: an answer to the question "Why does God permit evil?" But perhaps a serious theodicy would have to answer other questions as well: for example, why does God permit so much evil, and why does God permit suffering? Concede that you can't have Atonement without evil; why do you also need suffering? Incarnation and Atonement requires sin and evil: why think it also requires suffering? Wouldn't the cosmos have been better if God had permitted sin and evil, so that there was occasion for Incarnation and Atonement, but no suffering? Maybe the Felix Culpa line of thought explains the existence of sin and evil; how does it help with respect to suffering?

The answer is two-fold: (a) significantly free creatures are free to do evil, and some of them in fact do evil, causing suffering; (b) suffering itself is instrumentally valuable. So first, one goodmaking feature of a world is the existence, in it, of free and rational creatures. But free creatures come in a variety of versions, and not all free creatures are equal, with respect to value, i.e., to the value of the worlds in which they exist. In general, the more free creatures resemble God, the more valuable they are and the more valuable are the worlds in which they exist. In particular, creatures that have a great deal of power, including power to do both good and evil, are more valuable than creatures who are free, but whose power is limited or meager. God therefore created a world in which there are creatures with at least two features: (a) a great deal of power, including the power to work against God, and (b) the

freedom to turn their backs upon God, to rebel against him, fight against what he values. Thus Milton's Satan declares "Evil, be Thou my Good!"; in so doing he announces his intention to take up arms against God, to resist him, to try to destroy what God values, to do his best to wreck God's world, to promote what God hates. Suffering is intrinsically a bad thing; accordingly God hates it; Satan therefore aims to promote suffering, to cause as much of it as he can. Much of the suffering in the world results in this way from the free actions of creatures who actively oppose God and what he values. But free creatures also cause suffering, sometimes, not because they intend in this way actively to oppose God, but just because they don't have any objection to inflicting suffering on others in order to achieve their own selfish or foolish ends. Here one thinks of the enormous suffering inflicted, in the 20th century, on the population of the former Soviet Union in order to attain that Marxist paradise; Stalin and his henchmen recklessly run roughshod over the rights and goods of others in order to achieve something they saw as valuable. At least some of the suffering the world displays results from the free actions of significantly free creatures.

But what about so-called natural evil, evil that cannot be attributed to the free actions of human beings? What about the suffering due to disease, earthquake, flood, famine, pestilence and the like? What about animal suffering and the savagery displayed in the natural world? What about the Ichneumenid wasp Darwin found so upsetting, a wasp that lays its eggs in a live caterpillar, so that when the eggs hatch, the pupae eat the caterpillar alive from the inside? Well, perhaps, as Peter van Inwagen suggests, this is the price God had to pay for a regular world. But there is another and more traditional suggestion here. Perhaps the term 'natural evil' is something of a misnomer, or perhaps, at any rate, the contrast between natural evil and moral evil is misleading in that the former is really an instance of the latter. It is plausible to think that there are deeper layers to the sin and evil the world displays, than that exhibited by human beings and embodied in their actions. According to the apostle Paul, the whole creation is groaning, and groaning because of sin.²¹ Here a traditional suggestion is that suffering and evil of this sort is to be attributed to the actions of Satan and his cohorts; Satan is a mighty non-human free creature who rebelled against the Lord long before human beings were on the scene; and much of the natural evil the world displays is due to the actions of Satan and his cohorts.²²

This suggestion is not at present widely popular in Western academia, and not widely endorsed by the contemporary intellectual elite. But it is less than clear that western academia has much to say by way of evidence against the idea. That beings of these sorts should be involved in the history of our world seems to me (as to, e.g., C.S. Lewis and many others) not at all unlikely, in particular with respect to Christian theism. The thought that much evil is due to Satan and his cohorts is of course entirely consistent with God's being omnipotent, omniscient and perfectly good; furthermore it isn't nearly as improbable with respect to "what we now know" as most philosophers seem to assume. Objections to it consist much more in amused contempt or instinctive revulsion than in reasoned refutation. They are like those incredulous stares David Lewis complains of--not much by way of considered thought. But how much evidential value should be attached to a thing like that?

So suffering results, at least in part, from the actions of free creatures; and perhaps it wasn't within the power of God to create free creatures who are both capable of causing suffering and turn to evil, but never in fact do cause suffering. But further, perhaps even if God could create such creatures, he wouldn't want to, or wouldn't want to create only them. Perhaps worlds with free powerful creatures who sin but do not cause suffering are not as good as worlds in which they create suffering; for suffering is also itself of instrumental value. First, some suffering has the effect of improving our character and preparing God's people for life in his kingdom;²³ this world is in part a vale of soul-making, as John Hick and many others (including the apostle Paul) before him have suggested. Some suffering may also be the price of a regular world, as Peter van Inwagen suggests.²⁴ But according to the apostle Paul, there are other subtle ways in which suffering is of instrumental value. He suggests, for example, that our present suffering is a means to the eternal weight of glory prepared for those who follow him:

We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body. II Corinth 4:10-11, 14.

We are . . . fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared . . . Romans 8.

For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. II Corinth 4: 17

Our suffering can enable us to be glorified, and achieve for us an eternal glory; but we aren't told how this works: how is it that our suffering is a means to this eternal glory? Elsewhere there are tantalizing suggestions:

I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. Phil. 3:10-11.

I believe three things are suggested. First, there is the suggestion that sharing in the suffering of Christ is a means to attain "the resurrection from the dead", i.e., salvation. Second, it is a good thing that the followers of Christ share in his sufferings because this is a means of fellowship with him at a very profound level and a way in which they achieve a certain kind of solidarity with him; and third, in thus sharing his suffering, his followers come to resemble Christ in an important respect, thus displaying more fully the image of God.²⁵ Although these are deep waters, I'd like to say just a bit about the second and third suggestions. Consider the idea of fellowship with Christ in his suffering, then: what is valuable about fellowship in sharing in the sufferings of Christ? The suggestion, I think, is just that our suffering with Christ, thus joining him in the most profound expression of his love and enjoying solidarity with him in his central mission, is a good state of affairs; it is good that creatures, whose sins require this activity on his part, join him in it. Secondly, those who suffer resemble Christ in an important respect, thus displaying more fully the image of God, i.e., displaying that image more fully than they could have without the suffering. An absolutely central part of Christ's mission is his suffering; it is through this suffering that he atones for human sin and enables human beings to achieve union with God. But then if it is a good thing that creatures resemble Christ, it is a good thing that they resemble him in this respect as well. According to Jonathan Edwards, by virtue of our fall and subsequent redemption, we can achieve a level of intimacy with God that can't be achieved in any other way; by virtue of suffering we are invited to join the charmed circle of the Trinity itself. And according to Abraham Kuyper, the angels see this and are envious.²⁶ Perhaps another part of what is required for membership in this circle is solidarity with

Christ and resemblance to him with respect to suffering. The really mature Christian, furthermore, one like St. Paul, will welcome this opportunity. Furthermore, perhaps all of us who suffer will welcome the opportunity in retrospect. Julian of Norwich suggests that those who suffer will receive God's gratitude²⁷ and will of course much rather have had the suffering and received the divine gratitude than to have had neither. That too is a good state of affairs.

I say that our fellowship and solidarity in Christ's suffering and our resembling him in suffering are good states of affairs; I do not say that we can clearly see that they are indeed good states of affairs. My reason for saying that they are in fact good is not that it is simply obvious and apparent to us that they are good states of affairs, in the way in which it is simply apparent that severe suffering is intrinsically a bad thing. Perhaps this is indeed apparent to some especially mature or especially favored human beings, but it isn't to the rest of us. So I don't say this because it is evident to us, but rather because we learn from Scripture that these are good states of affairs-or, more modestly, we learn this from what seems to me to be the best understanding of the Scriptural passages in question. Someone might object that in a theodicy, one cannot appeal to goods we can't ourselves recognize to be goods; but why think a thing like that? A theodicy will of course make reference to states of affairs that are known to be good, or reasonably thought to be good. How this information is acquired is neither here nor there.

So why is suffering present in the really good possible worlds; why is it that they contain not just sin, evil, and rebellion, but also suffering? Because, first, some of the free creatures God has created have turned their backs on God and behaved in such a way as to cause suffering; and second, because suffering is itself of instrumental value, and thus will be found in really good worlds. Suffering is of instrumental value, furthermore, in several different ways. In addition to the ways suggested by Hick, Swinburne and van Inwagen, there is also the fact that the suffering of God's children enables them to be in fellowship and solidarity with the Lord Jesus Christ; it also enhances the image of God in them.

B. Why so much sin and suffering?

But why is there so much sin and suffering? Concede that every really good world contains both evil and suffering; but why does there have to be as much of these dubious quantities as our world in fact manifests? Wouldn't a world with much less sin and suffering than ours be a better world, even if it contains both incarnation and atonement and also some sin and suffering? Here there are two considerations. First, perhaps the counterfactuals of freedom come out in such a way that a world as good as ours will contain as much sin and suffering as ours. But secondly, there is the question how much sin and suffering a highly eligible world contains. This is not an easy question. As I've argued, the best worlds contain Incarnation and Atonement. But for all we know, there isn't any maximal amount of sin and suffering contained in such worlds; that is, there isn't an amount a of sin and suffering such that some world in this class contains a units (turps, perhaps) of sin and suffering and no world in this class contains more. Perhaps for every degree of sin and suffering contained in some highly eligible world, there is another highly eligible world with more. In the same way, for all we know there is no minimum degree of suffering among these highly eligible worlds. Perhaps for every degree of sin and suffering contained in some highly eligible world, there is another highly eligible world with less.

This is compatible with the degree of sin and suffering, in such worlds, being bounded both above and below: perhaps there is a degree of suffering and evil a such that every highly eligible world contains at least that much suffering and evil, and a degree a^* such that no highly eligible world contains more than that amount of suffering and evil. Then it could also be that for any given evil, God could have actualized a highly eligible world without permitting that evil; it doesn't follow that he would be unjustified in permitting it. It could also be that God could have actualized a world that is better than α , the actual world; it doesn't follow that he ought to have done so, since perhaps for every possible world there is a better he could have actualized.

A second complication: how much sin is required to warrant Incarnation and Atonement? Suppose the extent of sin were one small misstep on the part of an otherwise admirably disposed angel: would that be sufficient to warrant such drastic and dramatic action on the part of God? Wouldn't such a response on the part of God be somehow inappropriate, something like overkill, perhaps? Probably,

although one hardly knows what to say. It might be objected that God, given the unlimited extent of his love, would be willing to undergo the suffering involved in Incarnation and Atonement, even to save just one sinner. Perhaps so; but that is compatible with its being more appropriate that God's magnificent action here save many, perhaps indefinitely many. Christian doctrine includes, of course, the teaching that human beings are immortal, and can spend eternity with God; the more creatures who attain that state, presumably, the better. Jonathan Edwards and Abraham Kuyper believe, as we saw above, that fallen creatures who are redeemed can be admitted to a greater degree of intimacy with God (can join that charmed circle) than creatures who have not fallen. If so, the highly eligible worlds would no doubt contain a good deal of sin and evil--and, also, consequently, a good deal of suffering. How much sin and evil, then, will a highly eligible world contain? That is hard to say; and again, of course, there may be no answer.

Considering all of these then--our lack of knowledge of the relevant counterfactuals of freedom, the fact that suffering is of instrumental value in a variety of ways--it seems to me that we have no way at all of estimating how much suffering the best worlds will contain, or where the amount of suffering and evil contained in alpha stands in comparison with those worlds. This objection, therefore, is inconclusive.

C. Munchausen by proxy?

Finally, an objection that has no doubt been clamoring for attention; this objection is powerful, but a little hard to state. The basic idea, however, goes something like this: wouldn't God, in the scenario we're thinking about, be using his creatures, treating them like means, not ends?²⁸ God has this magnificent end of actualizing a highly eligible possible world (one in which he incidentally plays the stellar role); this requires suffering and evil on the part of his creatures, and apparently requires a good deal of innocent suffering and evil: is that fair, or right? More crucially, would this be consistent with God's loving these creatures,²⁹ as according to Christian belief he certainly does? If he loved them, would he compel them to suffer in this way so that he can achieve these fine ends? Or perhaps we could put it

like this: isn't there something unduly calculating about this procedure? Isn't this a scenario for a sort of cosmic Munchausen-by-Proxy syndrome?³⁰ Isn't it too much like a father who throws his children into the river so that he can then heroically rescue them, or a doctor who first spreads a horrifying disease so that he can then display enormous virtue in fighting it in heroic disregard of his own safety and fatigue? Could we really think God would behave in this way? How could it be in character for God to riffle through the whole range of possible creatures he could create and the circumstances in which he could create them, to find some who would freely sin, and then create them, so that he could display his great love by saving them? How could God be so manipulative?

According to my dictionary, manipulation, in the currently relevant sense, is "management with the use of unfair, scheming, or underhanded methods, especially for one's own advantage"; and calculating behavior is "marked by coldhearted calculation as to what will most promote self-interest". Manipulation thus involves seeking one's own advantage by unfair means; and the problem with calculating behavior is that it is "coldhearted". The idea, then, is that if God acted according to the Felix Culpa line of thought, he would be unfair to his creatures and would be acting in a coldhearted, i.e., unloving way. This coldheartedness part of the present strand of the objection, therefore, reduces to the charge of unlovingness, the other strand in the objection. This leaves the charge of unfairness. But why would it be unfair of God to behave in this way towards his creatures? For two reasons, perhaps: (a) this way of behaving on God's part requires suffering on the part of his creatures; and it is unfair of God to act in such a way as to require suffering on the part of his creatures in order to attain or achieve his own ends as opposed to what is good for them; and (b) involving his creatures in this way is unfair because it fails to respect their autonomy. And both of these could be thought of as treating his creatures as means, not ends.

Of course it isn't always wrong for you to treat me as a means rather than an end. You hire me to weed your garden or repair your car or instruct your children: are you not then treating me as a means rather than an end? You are not thinking first, or perhaps at all, of my needs and interests, but of your own; and you get me to do something that serves your ends. Of course I am perhaps also treating you as

means under those conditions: I take the job so that I can earn some money, enabling me to accomplish some of my own ends. So exactly why would it be out of character for God to treat his creatures as a means? Perhaps the problem is along the following lines: you offer to hire me to weed your garden, and of course I can refuse; similarly, I don't force you to hire me. But with God, of course, it is quite different. He doesn't ask our permission before creating us, before actualizing this world in which we are called upon to suffer. We don't accept the suffering voluntarily; we don't get a choice; God doesn't consult us before actualizing this world, this world that requires our suffering. Obviously he couldn't have consulted us about whether we wish to be created in a world such as this, but still he doesn't; and isn't that somehow unfair? So with respect to this strand of the objection, the charge is two-fold: God requires his creatures to suffer, not for their own good, but in order to advance some aims or ends of his own; and (b) God does this without asking their permission.

The second strand of the objection--the strand according to which if God loved his creatures, he would not act in accord with the *Felix Culpa* scenario--reduces to the same charge: God's love for his creatures is incompatible with his requiring them to suffer in order to advance divine aims or ends that do not advance the creatures good or welfare. The claim is that if God loves creatures the way he is said to, he would not treat them in that fashion. Marilyn Adams and Eleonore Stump, both extraordinarily thoughtful writers on evil and suffering, have both proposed what Adams calls "agent centered restrictions" on the way in which a holy, just and loving God would treat us. Asking how Christian philosophers can now best contribute to the solution of the problem of evil, she replies that they "should focus on God's agent centered goodness: the very dimension rendered so baffling in the face of horrific individual sufferings." And Stump says The thought is that Christian philosophers should recognize that God is wholly good, but also perfectly loving, loves each of his creatures with a perfect love. If so, could it be that he would permit a person S to suffer for the good of someone else, (or, more abstractly, permit S to suffer because S's suffering is an element in the best world God can actualize)? If God perfectly loves his creatures, he would not require one of them to suffer in order to advance an end or aim that wasn't directly connected with that agent's own welfare. God wouldn't require me to suffer in order

to benefit someone else; he wouldn't even require me to suffer in order to actualize an extremely good world; he wouldn't require me to suffer, unless that suffering was necessary for some good for me myself.

Now as we have seen, some suffering is directly connected with the agent's good. But it doesn't appear that all suffering is. So suppose some suffering is not. How shall we think about this? Here we must make some distinctions. First, of course, God might, in perfect consonance with his love, permit me to suffer in order to benefit someone else or to achieve a highly eligible good world if I freely consent to it and (like Christ) voluntarily accept the suffering. But suppose I don't voluntarily accept it: perhaps I am unable, for one reason or another, to make the decision whether or not to accept the suffering in question. (Perhaps the suffering is childhood suffering.) Well, of course we sometimes quite properly make important decisions for someone (in a coma, say) who can't make the decision for herself; we try to determine what the person in question would decide if he could make the decision himself. So suppose further that God knew that if I were able to make that decision, I would freely accept the suffering: then too, so far as I can see, his being perfectly loving wouldn't at all preclude his permitting me to suffer for the benefit of others, or to enable him to achieve his end of actualizing a highly eligible good world. But suppose still further, that I am able to make the decision and in fact would not accept the suffering; but suppose God knows that this unwillingness on my part would be due only to ignorance: if I knew the relevant facts, then I would accept the suffering. In that case too, God's perfect love, as far as I can see, would not preclude his permitting me to suffer. Finally, suppose further yet that God knows that I would not accept the suffering in question, but only because of disordered affections; if I had the right affections (and also knew enough), then I would accept the suffering: in this case too, as far as I can see, his being perfectly loving would not preclude his allowing me to suffer. In this case God would be like a mother who, say, insists that her eight-year-old child take piano lessons or go to church or school.

There is another distinction that must be made. Perhaps God's reason for permitting me to suffer is not that by undergoing this suffering I can thus achieve a greater good (the good of enjoying his gratitude, for example: see footnote 27) but because he can thus achieve a better world overall.

Nevertheless, perhaps it is also true that he would not permit me to suffer for that end, an end outside my own good, unless he could also bring good for me out of the evil. Then his reason for permitting me to suffer would not be that this suffering contributes to my own improvement; nevertheless he would not permit me to suffer unless the suffering could somehow be turned to my own good.³¹ A constraint on God's reasons (induced, perhaps, by his being perfectly loving) is one thing; a constraint on the conditions under which he would permit involuntary and innocent suffering is another. To return to an earlier example (above, p. 000), perhaps God sees that the best worlds he can actualize are ones that include the unthinkable great good of divine incarnation and atonement. Suppose he therefore actualizes a highly eligible world that includes Incarnation and Atonement, and in which human beings fall into sin, evil and consequent suffering. Suppose also that the final condition of human beings, in this world, is better than it is in the worlds in which there is no fall into sin but also no incarnation and redemption; they receive God's thanks, enjoy a greater intimacy with him, are invited to join that charmed circle. Then God's actualizing the world in question involves suffering for many human beings; his reason for permitting that suffering is not that thereby the suffering individuals will be benefited (his reason is that he wishes to actualize a highly eligible world, one with the great goods of Incarnation, Atonement and Redemption). Nevertheless his perfect love perhaps mandates that he actualize a world in which those who suffer are benefited in such a way that their condition is better than it is in those worlds in which they do not suffer.

By way of conclusion: the Felix Culpa approach does not dispell all the perplexity surrounding human suffering and evil; I suppose nothing can do that. But perhaps it reduces the perplexity, and perhaps it provides the means for a deeper grasp of the salvific meaning of suffering and evil.

¹ Many Supras also held that God's first decree included that some should be damned as well as that some should be saved; perhaps this accounts for the association of Supralapsarianism with the sterner sort of Calvinism.

² *God, Revelation, and Authority*, volume vi, *God Who Stands and Stays* (Waco, Texas: Word Books 1983), p. 88.

³ It is worth noting that there are many *different* problems, questions and topics that fall under the rubric of the problem of evil. There are, for example, the problems of *preventing* suffering and evil, that of *alleviating* it (knowing how to comfort and help those that suffer from it), that of maintaining the right attitude towards those who suffer, the pastoral or spiritual problem I mentioned above, and more; and of course a proper response to one of these problems might be totally inappropriate as a response to another.

⁴ *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*, ed. Richard Popkin (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1980), p. 63. Hume puts the argument in the mouth of Philo, widely thought to represent Hume's own views.

⁵ See , e.g., chapter 14 of my book *Warranted Christian Belief*.

⁶ A noseem is a very small midge with a bite out of all proportion to its size. The reference is to the fact that your failing to see a noseem in your tent is no evidence that there aren't any there; similarly, failing to see what God's reason is for a given evil is no reason to think he doesn't or couldn't have a reason.

⁷ See, e.g., Steve Wykstra, "Difficulties in Rowe's Argument for Atheism, and in One of Plantinga's Fustigations against It", read on the Queen Mary at the Pacific Division Meeting of the American Philosophical Association, 1983, and "The Humian Obstacle to Evidential Arguments from Suffering: on Avoiding the Evils of 'Appearance,'" *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 16 (1984), pp. 73-94.

⁸ See Donald Turner's 1994 Ph.D. dissertation *God and the Best of all Possible Worlds* (University of Pittsburgh). Here we must be careful: there is a good world W where you wear your blue shirt today, and another that differs from W only (substantially) in that you wear your yellow shirt today; a good world W where you have a coke for lunch and another just like it except that you have coffee. God does not, of course, create cosmoi corresponding to all of these. That is because you yourself could not be in more than one cosmos; so while he creates cosmoi corresponding to each of the good possible worlds, the appropriate function is many-one. For details see Turner's dissertation.

⁹ Here Marilyn Adams and Eleonore Stump have led the way: see, for example, Stump's "Aquinas on the Sufferings of Job" in *The Evidential Argument From Evil*, ed. Daniel Howard-Snyder (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996) and "Second Person Accounts and the Problem of Evil," in *Faith and the Problem of Evil*, Stob Lectures at Calvin College, January 1999 (Grand Rapids: Calvin College, 1999), and Adams' "Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God" in *The Problem of Evil* ed. Marilyn Adams and Robert Adams (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

¹⁰ For the notion of possible worlds in play here, see my *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), chapter 4 and "Actualism and Possible Worlds" *Theoria* 1976, pp. 139 ff., reprinted in Michael Loux *The Actual and the Possible* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979). For the notions of strong and weak actualization, see the Profiles volume *Alvin Plantinga*, ed. James Tomberlin and Peter van Inwagen (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1985) (hereafter 'Profiles'), pp. 49ff.

¹¹ I don't mean to address here the question whether it is states of affairs or objects or events that are the primary locus of value; in either case states of affairs will be good or bad.

¹² *The Nature of Necessity* pp. 180ff, and *Profiles* pp. 50ff.

¹³ God strongly actualizes a given state of affairs S just if he causes S to be actual.

¹⁴ I don't have the space here to respond to objections to this assumption. Perhaps the most important of these objections is the so-called 'grounding' objection offered by Robert Adams in "Middle Knowledge and the Problem of Evil," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 1977, and William Hasker "A Refutation of Middle Knowledge," *Nous*, December 1986. This objection goes all the way back to the Jesuit/Dominican controversy in the 16th century, a dispute whose increasing rancor finally induced the Pope to forbid the disputants to vilify one another in public (although he apparently didn't object to vilification among consenting adults in the privacy of their own quarters). The grounding and founding objection has been dealt with in magisterial fashion in my colleague Thomas Flint's book *Divine Providence: The Molinist Account* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).

¹⁵ This is trivial; every possible world W containing creatures is such that there is some possible world in which God actualizes W: W itself.

¹⁶ As was pointed out to me by Tom Flint, for whose penetrating comments on this and other topics of this paper I am extremely grateful.

¹⁷ The Roman Catholic Easter Vigil liturgy contains the words, "O felix culpa, quae talem ac tantum meruit habere Redemptorem".

¹⁸ *Profiles*, p. 35.

¹⁹ The same idea is to be found elsewhere in Paul's writings: see, e.g., Romans 1:17.

²⁰ Here I am indebted for a correction to Tom Flint.

²¹ "For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time" (Romans 1: 18-22).

²² Thus, for example, Dom Bruno Well:

So the fallen angels which have power over the universe and over this planet in particular, being motivated by an intense angelic hatred of God and of all creatures, have acted upon the forces of matter, actuating them in false proportions so far as lay in their power, and this from the very outset of evolution, thus producing a deep-set disorder in the very heart of the universe which manifests itself today in the various physical evils which we find in nature, and among them the violence, the savagery and the suffering of animal life. This does not mean that, for instance, an earthquake or a thunderstorm is due directly to satanic action. It is due to purely natural causes, but these causes are what they now are owing to the deep-set disorder in the heart of nature resulting from this action of fallen spirits, most subtly mingled with the action of good spirits, throughout the long ages of the world's formation--'an enemy came and sowed tares also amid the wheat'. *Why does God Permit Evil?* (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne Ltd., 1941), (pp. 49-50). Aquinas approvingly quotes Damascene to the same effect: "The devil was one of the angelic powers who presided over the terrestrial order" (ST I, Q. 110, a. 1, ad 3).

²³ "God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it." (Hebrews 12:10-11)

²⁴ See, e.g., "The Magnitude, Duration, and Distribution of Evil" in *God, Knowledge and Mystery* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 118.

²⁵ Simone Weil: ". . . the distress of the abandoned Christ is a good. There cannot be a greater good for us on earth than to share in it." "The Love of God and Affliction" in *On Science, Necessity and the Love of God* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 177.

²⁶ *To be Near Unto God*, trans. from the Dutch by John Hendrik de Vries (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1918,) p. 307).

²⁷ *Revelations of Divine Love*, chapter 14.

²⁸ This way of putting the objection was suggested to me by Michael Schrynamacher.

²⁹ See Marilyn Adams, "Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God" in *The Problem of Evil* ed. Marilyn Adams and Robert Adams (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

³⁰ "[Child abuse] includes not only children who have suffered physical abuse with fractures and bruises ("the battered child") but also those who have experienced emotional abuse, sexual abuse, deliberate poisoning, and the infliction of fictitious illness on them by their parents (Munchausen syndrome. . .)" (*Encyclopedia Britannica*)

³¹ See, e.g., *Romans* 8:28.